

MISCELLANEOUS READINGS
by Willis E. Bishop

From "Herald of Holiness"

The story is told of a nun who apparently had a vision of the Lord. The bishop summoned the "visionary" to check out the story. When the nun arrived, the bishop presented her with this question to ask the Lord if she saw Him again: "What sin did I commit before I became bishop?" Since only the bishop and the Lord knew of the sin, it seemed a great test of whether the nun's visions were real.

The nun left and after a period of time called to report another vision. She was again called before the bishop and his immediate question was, "What did the Lord say my sin was before I became bishop?"

The nun quickly replied, "The Lord said He could not remember."

1-16-96: "How Rich are You?" They huddled inside the storm door, two children in ragged, outgrown coats. "Any old papers, lady?" I was very busy; I wanted to say no, until I looked down at their feet. Thin little sandals sopped with sleet. Their soggy sandals left marks on the clean hearthstone. "Come in and I'll make you a cup of cocoa." Cocoa and cake would fortify them against the chill outside. After serving them I went back to the kitchen and started on my household budget as they sat enjoying the room's warmth. After two minutes, the silence in the front room struck me and I went to look in. The little girl held in her hand an empty cup, looking at it. The boy asked in a flat voice, "Lady, are you rich?" "Am I rich? Mercy no." I looked at my shabby slipcovers. The girl put her cup back in its saucer carefully. "Your cups match your saucers." Her voice was old with a hunger which was not that of the stomach. Then they left holding their bundles of papers against the wind. They hadn't said "Thank you." They didn't need to. They had done much more than that. Plain blue pottery cups and saucers, but they matched. I tested the potatoes and stirred the gravy. Potatoes and brown gravy, a roof over our heads, my husband with a good steady job, these things matched too. I moved the chairs back from the fire and tidied the living room. The muddy prints of small sandals were still on my hearth. I let them be. I wanted them to remain as long as possible so I would not forget how rich I really am.

1-30-96 Article: In Forrest Lawn Cemetery in Los Angeles there is a replica in art glass of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper." The masterpiece has been so fashioned by the artist and so placed by skilled hands that as the daylight wanes and the faces of the apostles slowly fade into dimness, and they are altogether then in darkness, the face of our Savior shines with the same brilliant grace even at midnight. This is the artist's version of His promise to us and to all who trust, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

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2-13-96: A famed English hymnist, Charles Wesley, was once enduring depressing circumstances. While contemplating his troubles, he sat at his desk by an open window. Suddenly a small bird fluttered into the room, darted across his chest and crept inside his coat. Gently putting his hand over the trembling bird, Wesley could feel its heart racing. He looked out the window and immediately saw the reason for the bird's fear. Circling nearby was a huge hawk. Still holding the bird against his chest and seeing in its frantic flight a picture of his own search for refuge, Wesley wrote the words,

Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly.
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high.

Hide me, O my Savior, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into Thy haven guide,
O receive my soul at last.

3-26-96 Reading: The group of believers were in a little chapel when Korean communist soldiers barged in. One of the soldiers ripped the picture of Christ off the wall and threw it on the floor. He ordered, "Each one of you spit on this picture and curse Jesus' name." The first three Christians did what the soldier had commanded. They spit on the picture; they cursed the name of Christ. The fourth Christian in line was a high-school girl. She came before the picture, dropped to her knees. She wiped the spittle off with her skirt and said, "Kill me. I cannot curse His name." The soldier commanded, "Get up." They blindfolded the girl with the three men and marched them out behind the chapel. Three shots rang out. The soldiers came back in with the girl alive. The soldier explained, "Anyone who gives up what they believe that easily is not fit to be a communist." And they marched out.

4-2-96 A number of years ago there was a publication called "The Bible Expositor Illuminator," published in Cleveland, Ohio, and written on the lessons of the "International Sunday School Series." This included a golden memory verse. At that time Harry Rimmer, one of my favorite writers (though I disagreed with him on some things), wrote the exposition of the memory verse. He wrote a comment on Mark 16:6 - "He is risen." I will read a small paragraph, which to me was one of the golden paragraphs that anybody has ever written, as follows:

It is not courage that gives the Christian a calm assurance in the face of death. Rather, it is knowledge. We have a wisdom which the world cannot apprehend. We know that death

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is but a graduation for those who possess a diploma which is signed by Jesus in the red ink of Calvary and we rejoice at the great commencement, either for ourselves or our friends.

Some of us of course are fearful of death, but we need to remember that when we come to that point, it is not courage but knowledge of the fact that Christ is risen and we are in Him.

Prayer: Our Father, we thank You today for the victory of the cross, especially because it ends in the open tomb. As we enter into this particular season, we thank You for the assurance that, if we have placed our faith in Thee, that all, all is well, and that the end of the story is blessed hope and joy and peace forevermore. We pray that this may be our faith, our hope, our knowledge, that in Him there is a diploma that secures the wonderful future we have in Him. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Reading - 2-10-98 Class: A Plan that Went Wrong

"In a cemetery in Hanover, Germany there is a grave on which great slabs of granite and marble were piled, cemented together and fastened with steel clasps. It's the grave of a woman who did not believe that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead nor that she or anyone else could live again after death. In her will she ordered her grave to be made so secure that if there were a resurrection of the dead it couldn't reach her. On the stone these words were engraved: "This burial place must never be opened."

"A little seed, however, chanced to be covered over by the stones and, beginning to grow, tried to find its way to the light. You wouldn't think that a growing plant could wrench those steel clasps from their sockets and burst the cemented stone slabs, but it did. That little seed has become a full-grown tree and the great stones have fallen over to give it room.

"Caiaphas and the other enemies of the Lord Jesus thought that when the tomb in which His body had been laid was made secure it couldn't be opened. But the power of God that worked through a little seed in Hanover worked in a more marvelous way to open that tomb near Jerusalem."

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, we thank You this morning that our hope and our trust and our faith is in such a great God, who shook the mountains as He gave His life for our sins and yet came forth victorious over sin and death and the grave. Our Father, we meet this morning in His name to study a little bit about the inspired Word of the Living God. We pray that we may sense anew and afresh Your love for us, Your control of the future, and, above all things, that we are hidden in Your wonderful, majestic power. Forgive us of any sins that might be present, that we might, indeed, let the Holy

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Spirit teach. Lord, we are talking this morning about prophetic things and we need Your help. Not what a man may say but what you have written. We pray that You would give to each of a thinking mind, and then as we speak, we pray that You will overrule that which has been said incorrectly for the sake of our Savior in whose name we pray. Amen.

Reading - 3-17-98 class: Feeling Good When Life Feels Bad

"Don't tell me about Heaven and eternity. If you want me to listen to anything about Christianity make it practical. I want to hear about things that make me happy now." To this challenge the wise Christian responded, "Oh, Okay. Then let me tell you about Heaven and eternity. There is more nothing encouraging than hearing and being assured of Christ's promises of forgiveness, grace and the resulting life in Heaven which is ours. In that light, every Christian is an eschatologist [eschatology is a fancy word for a doctrine of last things - things that come last]. This means we are concerned about and focus much of our attention on things which pertain to the end of this world and life in the next world. Jesus Himself had this future-oriented outlook. He could feel good about what happened to Him, even when what happened to Him wasn't very pleasant at all.

"Holy Scripture gives us a picture of Jesus 'who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning the shame' (Hebrews 12:2). The mere thought of so many people having eternal life because of His work which He was doing took the bitter edge off of the suffering Jesus faced. There was joy for Jesus even when He was burdened with shame and misery.

"Can there be such joy for us, too, when life dishes out its worst? God reminds us, 'Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus' (Philippians 2:5). Even when we think that everything that could possibly go wrong is going wrong, we can be joyful as Christ was joyful. Why? We have something to look forward to. We know we are going to be with our Lord eternally in Heaven. We also know that whatever happens to us in the meantime is being used by God to direct our steps toward that eternal goal of Heaven. Hasn't God assured His people, including us, 'I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you, not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' (Jeremiah 29:11).

"The tough part for people is that it is a matter of faith. We have no proofs toward somewhere in the test-tube to show that our problems will be worked out by the Lord. We can only believe what He will do and what He says he will do He will do. We walk by faith, not by sight. Maybe we are afraid our faith will let us down when the going gets really rough. If so, stop worrying. It isn't your faith that makes much importance at all. It's the object of

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your faith that is important. Dear Lord Jesus, the object of your faith, is the one who carries us through those difficulties.

"One Christian recently found out just how good God makes one feel even when he is feeling bad. Lying in an emergency room, hearing the doctors calling for morphine and nitroglycerin, he realized the doctors were treating him for a full-blown heart attack. For the first time in his life he actually thought to himself, 'I could die from this.' In seconds, faith in Christ supplied a simple response, 'Fool.' Fool indeed. Heaven awaits us. Life might not be fun when we're sick, financially broke, hurting, grieving, or even dying. But as Christians we're eschatologists. We look beyond the moment of trial to see eternity. And as Christians who have experienced and received the peace of God which passes all understanding, we know that we can feel good even when life feels bad."

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, we pray that this may be true of each of us today. That our faith having been placed in You as Savior, we will realize that you are working all things together for good. In the midst of our problems, and they do come and they are here, we pray that we may indeed have the view of the fact that we are in good hands. Help us to trust and to rejoice, for we know that the joy of our salvation is our strength. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.